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SOLEMN REVIEW

OF THE

CUSTOM OF WAR;

SHOWING

THAT WAR IS THE EFFECT OF POPULAR DELUSION,

AND

PROPOSING A REMEDY.

BY PHILO PACIFICUS,

“A glorious success, quietly obtained, is more profitable than the dangers of a battle; for we ought to esteem those, who do what is agreeable to temperance and prudence, no less glorious than those, who have gained great reputation by their actions in war.” *Vespasian.*

FIFTH EDITION.

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CAMBRIDGE:

PRINTED BY HILLIARD AND METCALF.

Sold by Wells & Lilly, No. 97, Court-Street, Boston.

1816.

HC 91. 151. 161

## SOLEMN REVIEW.

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### SECTION I.

*“ Shall the sword devour forever ?”*

WE regard with horror the custom of the ancient heathens in offering their children in sacrifice to idols. We are shocked with the customs of the Hindoos, in prostrating themselves before the car of an idol to be crushed to death ; in burning women alive on the funeral piles of their husbands ; in offering a monthly sacrifice, by casting living children into the Ganges to be drowned. We read with astonishment of the sacrifices made in the papal crusades, and in the Mahometan and Hindoo pilgrimages. We wonder at the blindness of christian nations, who have esteemed it right and honorable to buy and sell Africans as property, and reduce them to bondage for life. But that which is fashionable and popular in a country is esteemed right and honorable, whatever may be its nature in the views of men better informed.

But while we look back with a mixture of wonder, indignation and pity, on many of the customs of former ages, are we careful to inquire, whether some customs, which we deem honorable, are not the effect of popular delusion ? and whether they will not be so regarded by future generations ? Is it not a fact, that one of the most horrid customs of savage men, is now popular in every nation in Christendom ? What custom of the most barbarous nations is more repugnant to the feelings of piety, humanity and justice, than that of deciding controversies between nations by the edge of the sword, by powder and ball, or the point of the bayonet ? What other savage custom has occasioned half the desolation and misery



to the human race? And what but the grossest infatuation, could render such a custom popular among rational beings?

When we consider how great a part of mankind have perished by the hands of each other, and how large a portion of human calamity has resulted from war; it surely cannot appear indifferent, whether this custom is or is not the effect of delusion. Certainly there is no custom which deserves a more thorough examination, than that which has occasioned more slaughter and misery, than all the other abominable customs of the heathen world.

War has been so long fashionable among all nations, that its enormity is but little regarded; or when thought of at all, it is usually considered as an evil necessary and unavoidable. Perhaps it is really so in the present state of society, and the present views of mankind. But the question to be considered is this; cannot the state of society and the views of civilized men be so changed as to abolish a barbarous custom, and render wars unnecessary and avoidable?

If this question may be answered in the affirmative, then we may hope "the sword will not devour forever."

Some may be ready to exclaim, none but God can produce such an effect as the abolition of war; and we must wait for the millennial day. We admit that God only can produce the necessary change in the state of society, and the views of men; but God works by human agency and human means. God only could have overthrown the empire of Napoleon; but this he did by granting success to the efforts of the allied powers. He only could have produced such a change in the views of the British nation, as to abolish the slave trade; yet the event was brought about by a long course of persevering and honorable exertions of benevolent men.

When the thing was first proposed, it probably appeared to the majority of the people, as an unavailing and chimerical project. But God raised up powerful advocates, gave them the spirit of perseverance, and finally crowned their efforts with glorious success. Now, it is probable, thousands



of people are wondering how such an abominable traffic ever had existence in a nation which had the least pretensions to christianity or civilization. In a similar manner God can put an end to war, and fill the world with astonishment, that rational beings ever thought of such a mode of settling controversies.

As to waiting for the millennium to put an end to war, without any exertions on our own part; this is like the sinner's waiting God's time for conversion, while he pursues his course of vice and impiety. If ever there shall be a millennium, in which the sword will cease to devour, it will probably be effected by the blessing of God on the benevolent exertions of enlightened men. Perhaps no one thing is now a greater obstacle in the way of the wished for state of the church, than the *spirit* and *custom* of war, which is maintained by christians themselves. Is it not then time, that efforts should be made to enlighten the minds of christians on a subject of such infinite importance to the happiness of the human race?

It is not the present object to prove, that a nation may not defend their lives, their liberties and their property against an invading foe; but to inquire whether it is not possible to effect such a change in the views of men, that there shall be no occasion for *defensive* war. That such a state of things is desirable, no enlightened christian can deny. That it can be produced without expensive and persevering efforts is not imagined. But are not such efforts to exclude the miseries of war from the world, as laudable, as those which have for their object the support of such a malignant and desolating custom?

The whole amount of property in the United States is probably of far less value, than what has been expended and destroyed within two centuries by wars in Christendom. Suppose, then, that one fifth of this amount had been judiciously laid out by peace associations in the different states and nations, in cultivating the spirit and art of peace, and in exciting a just abhorrence of war; would not the other four fifths have been in a great measure saved, besides many millions of

lives, and an immense portion of misery ? Had the whole value of what has been expended in wars, been appropriated to the purpose of peace, how laudable would have been the appropriation, and how blessed the consequences !

## SECTION II.

*“ Shall the sword devour forever ? ”*

That it is possible to produce such a state of society, as to exclude national wars, may appear probable from the following facts.

1. It is impossible for the rulers of any one nation to do much in carrying on a war with another, without the aid of subjects, or the common people.

2. A war between two nations is generally produced by the influence of a small number of ambitious and unprincipled individuals ; while the greater part of the nation has no hand in the business until war is proclaimed.

3. A vast majority of every civilized nation have an aversion to war ; such an aversion that it requires much effort and management, to work up their passions so far, that they are willing personally to engage in such hazardous and bloody conflicts. The more any people are civilized and christianized, the greater is their aversion to war ; and the more powerful exertions are necessary to excite what is called the *war spirit*. Were it not for the influence of a few ambitious or revengeful men, an offensive war could not be undertaken with any prospect of success, except when the mass of the people are either uncivilized, or slaves. If then, as great exertions should be made to excite a just abhorrence of war, as have often been made to excite a war spirit, we may be very certain that rulers would find little encouragement to engage in any war, which is not strictly defensive. And as soon as offensive wars shall cease, defensive wars will of course be unknown.

4. It is an affront to common sense, to pretend that military officers and soldiers have no right to inquire whether a war be just or unjust ; and that all they have to do is to obey the

orders of government. Such a doctrine is fit to be taught only to slaves without souls. If a man is called to fight, he should be faithfully informed, and fully satisfied, that he is not to act the part of a murderer, that the blood of men may not be required at his hands. Every soldier ought to be impressed with the idea, that offensive war is murderous, and that no government on earth has any right to compel him to shed blood in a wanton and aggressive war. Yet in the present state of general delusion, the soldiers and most of the citizens are treated as having no more right to judge of the justice or the injustice of a war, than the horses employed in military service. On one side a war is certainly unjust and murderous. Yet on both sides it is considered as the duty of soldiers to submit to the orders of government, and fight, whether it be murder or not murder! With the same propriety it might be considered as the duty of a citizen, to obey an order of government for murdering an individual of his own nation.

5. National wars often originate from such petty offences, as would not justify the taking of a single life, and from false principles of honor, which every christian should abhor. What can be more perfect delusion, than to suppose the *honor* of a nation requires a declaration of war, for such offences as would not justify one individual in taking the life of another? Or what can be more absurd than to suppose the honor of a nation requires going to war, while there is not even the prospect of advantage? Is such petulance, as would disgrace a common citizen, or such a revengeful spirit, as would disgrace a savage, becoming the dignity of a national government, or the ruler of a christian people?

To sacrifice human beings to false notions of national honor, or to the ambition or avarice of rulers, is no better than to offer them to Moloch, or any other heathen deity. As soon as the eyes of people can be opened to see that war is the effect of delusion, it will then become as unpopular as any other heathenish mode of offering human sacrifices.

It is enough to fill the mind of any reflecting man with horror

ror, to think of the millions of his fellow men, who have been sacrificed to the ambition, the avarice, the petulance, or the profligacy of ungodly rulers. How shocking the thought, of armies meeting under the influence of enmity, artificially excited, to plunge their bayonets into the breasts of each other ; and thus to offer human sacrifices by thousands, to some idolized phantom of ambitious or revengeful men ! In every war that has taken place, the soldiers, on one side or the other, have been either the slaves or the dupes of deluded or unprincipled rulers. The soldiers on each side often meet without ever having experienced the least injury from each other ; with no enmity but what has been artificially excited, and without having the least ground to be offended with each other, any more than they had in a time of perfect peace. Yet those who never had any provocation from one another, nor any hand in proclaiming the war, are by art inspired with enmity, and made to thirst for each other's blood, and to perish by each other's hands. A more barbarous mode of offering human sacrifices was never practised by the most savage nations ; nor one, it is believed, more abhorrent in the eyes of Heaven.

Public wars and private duels seem to be practised on similar principles. Gentlemen may fight and kill for petty offences ; but if common people do the same, they are hanged as murderers. Gentlemen of the sword cannot wait the slow operation of law, for the redress of supposed wrongs, but must show themselves men of spirit, that is, ready to kill for an offensive word. What is deemed honorable virtue in them, is shameful vice in other people. That benevolent, forbearing spirit, which is the glory of good people, is thought beneath the dignity of a gentleman of honor. First to give a challenge, and thus notify a man of a wish to kill him, is supposed to exclude the sin of murder. So in regard to war makers, that magnanimity and forbearance, which would adorn the character of a private christian, is despised by the ambitious ruler, in relation to himself. And that petulance, rashness, and disregard to the lives of others, which would render a private

citizen the object of just and general abhorrence, are regarded by many, as honorable traits in the character of one, who is exalted to rule over men. If in the exercise of this haughty, unfeeling and vindictive temper he declares war, this declaration, he fancies, will secure him from the guilt of murder. Thus thousands after thousands are sacrificed on the altar of his ungodly ambition; and every means, which ingenuity can invent, is employed to delude the unfortunate victims, and make them believe, that with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

There is, however, one circumstance usually attending public wars, which renders them more detestable than private duels. The duellist usually has the generosity to do his own fighting; but war makers usually have the meanness to avoid the dangers which they create, and to call on other people to fight their battles.

Duelling is indeed a horrible custom; but war is as much more horrible, as it is more desolating and ruinous. As to the principles on which war is practised, it has no advantage of duelling. It is in fact *national duelling*, attended generally with this dishonorable circumstance, that those who give and accept the challenge, call together a multitude of seconds, and then have not the magnanimity, first to risk their own lives, but they involve their seconds in a bloody contest, while they themselves stand remote from danger, as spectators, or at most as directors of the awful combat. Or perhaps more commonly, after issuing their bloody mandate, they indulge in pleasure, regardless of the suffering of others. So "the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed."

### SECTION III.

*"Shall the sword devour forever?"*

In favor of war several pleas will probably be made.

First. Some will plead that the Israelites were permitted, and even commanded to make war on the inhabitants of Ca-

naan. To this it may be answered, that the Giver and Arbitrer of life had a right, if he pleased, to make use of the savage customs of the age, for punishing guilty nations. If any government of the present day should receive a commission to make war, as the Israelites did, let the order be obeyed. But until they have such a commission, let it not be imagined that they can innocently make war.

As a farther answer to this plea, we have to observe, that God has given encouragement, that under the reign of the Messiah, there shall be such a time of peace, "that nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Micah iv. 3. If this prediction shall ever be fulfilled, the present delusion in favor of war must be done away. How then are we to expect the way will be prepared for the accomplishment of the prediction? Probably this is not to be done by miraculous agency, but by the blessing of God on the benevolent exertions of individuals to open the eyes of their fellow mortals, in respect to the evils and delusions of war, and the blessings of peace. Those who shall be the instruments of producing so important a change in the views of men, will be in an eminent sense "peace makers," and will be entitled to the appellation and privileges of "the sons of God." How much more glorious the achievement, to conquer the prejudices and delusions of men on this subject by kindness and reason, than to conquer the world by the edge of the sword!

A second plea in favor of the custom of war may be this—that war is an advantage to a nation, as it usually takes off many vicious and dangerous characters. But does not war make two such characters for every one it removes? Is it not in fact the greatest school of depravity, and the greatest source of mischievous and dangerous characters that ever existed among men? Does not a state of war lower down the standard of morality in a nation, so that a vast portion of common vice is scarcely observed as evil? Let any one who was



old enough to observe the state of morals prior to our revolution, ask himself, What was the effect of that war on the morals of New England ?

Besides, is it not awful to think of sending vicious men beyond the means of reformation, and the hope of repentance ! When they are sent into the army, what is this but consigning them to a state where they will rapidly fill up the measure of their iniquity, and become “ fitted to destruction !”

Thirdly. It will be pleaded, that no substitute for war can be devised, which will insure to a nation a redress of wrongs. In reply we may ask, Is it common for a nation to obtain a *redress* of wrongs by war ? As to *redress*, do not the wars of nations resemble boxing at a tavern, when both the combatants receive a terrible bruising, then drink a mug of flip together and make peace ; each, however, bearing for a long time the marks of his folly and madness ? A redress of wrongs by war is so uncommon, that unless revenge is redress, and multiplied injuries satisfaction, we should suppose that none but madmen would run the hazard.

But if the eyes of people could be opened in regard to the evils and delusions of war, would it not be easy to form a confederacy of nations, and organize a high court of equity, to decide national controversies ? Why might not such a court be composed of some of the most eminent characters from each nation ; and a compliance with the decision of the court be made a point of national honor, to prevent the effusion of blood, and to preserve the blessings of peace ? Can any considerate person say, that the probability of obtaining right in such a court, would be *less* than by an appeal to arms ? When an individual appeals to a court of justice for the redress of wrongs, it is not always the case that he obtains his right. Still such an appeal is more honorable, more safe, and more certain, as well as more benevolent, than for the individual to attempt to obtain a redress by his pistol or his sword. And are not the reasons for avoiding an appeal to the sword, for the redress of wrongs, always great in proportion to the calamities, which such an appeal must naturally involve ? If this be a fact, then



there is infinitely greater reason, why two nations should avoid an appeal to arms, than usually exists against a bloody combat between two contending individuals.

In the fourth place it may be urged, that a spirit of forbearance on the part of a national government, would operate as an invitation to repeated insult and aggression.

But is this plea founded on facts and experience? Does it accord with what is well known of human nature? Who are the persons in society that most frequently receive insult and abuse? Are they the meek, the benevolent, and the forbearing? Do these more commonly have reason to complain, than persons of quick resentment, who are ready to fight on the least provocation?

There are two sects of professed christians in this country, which, as sects, are peculiar in their opinions respecting the lawfulness of war, and the right of repelling injury by violence. These are the Quakers and the Shakers. They are remarkably pacific. Now we ask, does it appear from experience that their forbearing spirit brings on them a greater portion of injury and insult than what is experienced by people of other sects? Is not the reverse of this true in fact? There may indeed be some instances of such gross depravity, as a person's taking advantage of their pacific character, to do them injury, with the hope of impunity. But in general, it is believed, their pacific principles and spirit command the esteem even of the vicious, and operate as a shield from insult and abuse.

The question may be brought home to every society. How seldom do children of a mild, forbearing temper experience insult or injury, compared with the waspish, who will sting if touched? The same inquiry may be made in respect to persons of these opposite descriptions of every age, and in every situation of life; and the result will be favorable to the point in question.

Should any deny the applicability of these examples to national rulers, we have the pleasure of being able to produce one example, which is undeniably applicable.

When William Penn took the government of Pennsylvania, he distinctly avowed to the Indians his forbearing and pacific principles, and his benevolent wishes for uninterrupted peace with them. On these principles the government was administered, while it remained in the hands of the Quakers. What then was the effect? Did this pacific character in government invite aggression and insult? Let the answer be given in the language of the Edinburgh Review of the Life of William Penn. Speaking of the treaty made by Penn with the Indians, the Reviewer says:—

“Such indeed was the spirit in which the negotiation was entered into, and the corresponding settlement conducted, that for the space of more than *seventy years*—and so long indeed as the quakers retained the chief power in the government, the peace and amity, which had been thus solemnly promised and concluded, never was violated; and a large though solitary example afforded, of the facility with which they, who are really sincere and friendly in their views, may live in harmony with those who are supposed to be peculiarly fierce and faithless.”

Shall then this “solitary” but successful “example” never be imitated? “Shall the sword devour forever?”

#### SECTION IV.

Some of the evils of war have already been mentioned, but the field is almost boundless. The demoralizing and depraving effects of war cannot be too seriously considered. We have heard much of the corrupting tendency of some of the rites and customs of the heathen; but what custom of the heathen nations had a greater effect in depraving the human character than the custom of war? What is that feeling usually called a *war spirit*, but a deleterious compound of enthusiastic arder, ambition, malignity and revenge? a compound, which as really endangers the *soul* of the possessor, as the *life* of his enemy! Who, but a person deranged or deluded, would think it safe to rush into the presence of his Judge, with his heart boiling with enmity, and his brother's blood drip

ping from his hands ! Yet in time of war, how much pains is taken to excite and maintain this bloodthirsty disposition, as essential to success !

The profession of a soldier exposes him to sudden and untimely death, and at the same time hardens his heart, renders and him regardless of his final account. When a person goes into the army, it is expected of him, that he will rise above the fear of death. In doing this he too commonly rises above the fear of God, and all serious concern for his soul. It is not denied that some men sustain virtuous characters amidst the contaminating vapors of a camp ; and some may be reformed by a sense of the dangers to which they are exposed ; but these are uncommon occurrences.

The depravity, occasioned by war, is not confined to the army. Every species of vice gains ground in a nation during a war. And when a war is brought to a close, seldom, perhaps, does a community return to its former standard of morals. In time of peace, vice and irreligion generally retain the ground they acquired by war. As every war augments the amount of national depravity, so it proportionably increases the dangers and miseries of society.\*

\* It has been suggested by a friend that there is an exception to this account—that Great Britain has been engaged in war the greater part of the time for a century, and that probably the moral and religious character of the nation has been improved during that period.

Admitting the correctness of this statement, it amounts to no more than *one* exception from a general rule ; and this one may be accounted for, on the ground of singular facts.

1. The Island of Great Britain has *not* been the *seat of war* for a long course of years. The wars of that nation have been carried on abroad ; and their army and navy have had little intercourse with the population at home. This mode of warfare has tended to remove from their own country the corrupting influence of military camps. Had their Island been the seat of war for eighty years out of a hundred, the effects would, in a great measure, have been reversed. But

2. There have been within 20 years, singular efforts in that nation, which have had a tendency to counteract the moral influence of war. Their Missionary Societies, their Bible Societies, and a vast number of religious, moral, and charitable institutions, must have had a powerful and favorable influence on the character of the nation. By *these*, and *not by wars*, the moral state of the nation has been improved.

Among the evil effects of war, a wanton undervaluing of human life ought to be mentioned. This effect may appear in various forms. When a war is declared for the redress of some wrong, in regard to property, if nothing but property be taken into consideration, the result is not commonly better, than spending five hundred dollars in a law suit, to recover a debt of ten. But when we come to estimate human lives against dollars and cents, how are we confounded! "All that a man hath will he give for his life." Yet, by the custom of war men are so deluded, that a ruler may give fifty or a hundred thousand lives, when only a trifling amount of property is in question, and when the probabilities are as ten to one against him, that even that small amount will not be secured by the contest. It must however again be remarked, that war makers do not usually give their *own* lives, but the *lives of others*. How often has a war been declared with the prospect that not less than 50,000 lives must be sacrificed; and while the chief agent in making the war would not have given his own life, to secure to his nation every thing that he claimed from the other? And are rulers to be upheld in thus gambling away the lives of others, while they are careful to secure their own? If people in general could obtain just views of this species of gambling, rulers would not make offensive wars with impunity. How little do they consider the misery and wretchedness which they bring on those, for whom they should exercise the kindness and care of a father! Does it not appear that they regard the lives of soldiers as mere property, which they may sacrifice, or barter away at pleasure? War is in truth the most dreadful species of gambling. Rulers are the gamblers. The lives and property of their subjects are the things they put to hazard in the game; and he that is most successful in doing mischief, is considered as the best gamester.

After all, we are perhaps not very adequate judges of the present depravity in that nation. Their army and navy may still be considered in estimating the amount of national depravity, as well as of population. Let these return home, be disbanded and mixed with the general mass of citizens; what then would be the moral state of society in Great Britain?

If by the custom of war, rulers learn to undervalue the lives of their own subjects, how much more do they undervalue the lives of their enemies ! As they learn to hear of the loss of five hundred, or a thousand of their own men, with perhaps less feeling than they would hear of the death of a favorite horse or dog ; so they learn to hear of the death of thousands after thousands on the side of the enemy, with joy and exultation. If their own men have succeeded in taking an unimportant fortress, or a frigate, with the loss of fifty lives on their own side, and fifty one on the other, this is a matter of joy and triumph. This time they have got the game. But alas ! at what expense to others ! This expense, however, does not interrupt the joy of war makers. They leave it to the wounded and the friends of the dead to *feel* and to *mourn*.

This dreadful depravity of feeling is not confined to rulers in time of war. The army becomes abandoned to such depravity. They learn to undervalue not only the lives of their enemies, but even their own ; and will often wantonly rush into the arms of death, for the sake of military glory. And more or less of the same want of feeling, and the same undervaluing of human life, extends through the nation, in proportion to the frequency of battles, and the duration of war.

If any thing be done by the army of one nation, which is deemed by the other as contrary to the modern usages in war ; how soon do we hear the exclamations, of *Goths and Vandals* ! Yet what are christians at war, better than those barbarous tribes ? and what is the war spirit in them, better than the spirit of Goths and Vandals ? When the war spirit is excited, it is not always to be circumscribed in its operations, by the refinements of civilization. It is at best a bloody and desolating spirit.

What is our boast of civilization, or christianization, while we tolerate, as popular and justifiable, the most horrid custom which ever resulted from human wickedness ! Should a period arrive when the nations “ shall learn war no more ; ” what will posterity think of our claims, as christians and civilized men ? The custom of sacrificing men by war, may appear to

them as the *blackest* of all heathen superstitions. Its present popularity may appear as wonderful to ages to come, as the past popularity of any ancient custom now does to us. What ! they may exclaim, could those be *Christians*, who would sacrifice men by thousands to a point of *honor*, falsely so called ; or to obtain a redress of a trifling wrong in regard to property ! If such were the customs of christians, what were they better than the heathens of their own time ?

Perhaps some apologist may rise up in that day, and plead, that it appears from the history of our times, that it was supposed necessary to the safety of a nation, that its government should be quick to assume a warlike tone and attitude, upon every infringement of their rights ; that magnanimous forbearance was considered as pusillanimity, and that christian meekness was thought intolerable in the character of a ruler.

To this others may reply—Could these professed christians imagine, that their safety depended on displaying a spirit the reverse of their Master's ? Could they suppose such a temper best calculated to insure the protection of him, who held their destiny in his hands ? Did they not know that wars were of a demoralizing tendency, and that the greatest danger of a nation resulted from its corruption and depravity ? Did they not also know, that a haughty spirit of resentment in one government, was very sure to provoke a similar spirit in another ? that one war usually paved the way for a repetition of similar calamities, by depraving each of the contending parties, and by fixing enmities and jealousies, which would be ready to break forth on the most frivolous occasions ?

## SECTION V.

That we may obtain a still clearer view of the delusions of war, let us look back to the origin of society. Suppose a family, like that of Noah, to commence the settlement of a country. They multiply into a number of distinct families. Then in the course of years they become so numerous, as to form distinct governments. In any stage of their progress, unfortunate dis-



putes might arise by the imprudence, the avarice, or the ambition of individuals.

Now at what period would it be proper to introduce the custom of deciding controversies by the edge of the sword, or an appeal to arms? Might this be done when the families had increased to ten? Who would not be shocked at the madness of introducing such a custom under such circumstances? Might it then with more propriety be done when the families had multiplied to fifty, or to a hundred, or a thousand, or ten thousand? The greater the number, the greater the danger, the greater the carnage and calamity. Besides, what reason can be given, why this mode of deciding controversies would not be as proper when there were but ten families, as when there were ten thousand. And why might not two individuals thus decide disputes, as well as two nations?

Perhaps all will admit that the custom could not be honorably introduced, until they separated, and formed two or more distinct governments. But would this change of circumstances dissolve their ties as brethren, and their obligations as accountable beings? Would the organization of distinct governments confer a right on rulers to appeal to arms for the settlement of controversies? Is it not manifest, that no period can be assigned: at which the introduction of such a custom would not be absolute murder? And shall a custom, which must have been murderous at its commencement, be now upheld as necessary and honorable!

But, says the objector, in determining the question, whether war is now the effect of delusion, we must consider what mankind *are*, and not what they would have been, had wars never been introduced.

To this we reply: We should consider both; and by what *ought* to have been the state of society, we may discover the present delusion, and the need of light and reformation. If it would have been to the honor of the human race, had the custom of war never commenced, it must be desirable to dispel the present darkness, and exterminate the desolating scourge. The same objection might have been made to the proposition



in the British Parliament for the abolition of the slave trade. the same may now be made against any attempt to abolish the custom of human sacrifices among the Hindoos ; yea, the same may be urged against every attempt to root out pernicious and immoral customs of long standing.

Let it then be seriously considered, how abominably murderous the custom must have been in its origin ; how precarious the mode of obtaining redress ; how often the aggressor is successful ; how small a part even of the successful nation is ever benefitted by the war ; how a nation is almost uniformly impoverished by the contest ; how many individuals are absolutely ruined as to property, or morals, or both ; and what a multitude of fellow creatures are hurried into eternity in an untimely manner, and an unprepared state. And who can hesitate a moment to denounce war as the effect of popular delusion ?

Let every christian seriously consider the malignant nature of that spirit, which war makers evidently wish to excite, and compare it with the temper of Jesus, and where is the christian who would not shudder at the thought of dying in the exercise of the common war spirit, and also at the thought of being the instrument of exciting such a spirit in his fellow men ? Any custom which cannot be supported but by exciting in men the very temper of the devil, ought surely to be banished from the christian world.

The impression, that aggressive war is murderous, is general among christians, if not universal. The justness of this impression seems to be admitted by almost every government in going to war. For this reason each of two governments endeavours to fix on the other the charge of aggression, and to assume to itself the ground of defending some right, or avenging some wrong. Thus each excuses itself, and charges the other with all the blood and misery, which result from the contest.

These facts, however, are so far from affording a plea in favor of the custom of war, that they afford a weighty reason for its abolition. If in the view of conscience, the aggressor

is a murderer, and answerable for the blood shed in war ; if one or the other must be viewed by God as the aggressor ; and if such is the delusion attending war, that each party is liable to consider the other as the aggressor ; surely there must be serious danger of a nation's being involved in the guilt of murder, while they imagine they have a cause which may be justified.

So prone are men to be blinded by their passions, their prejudices and their interests, that in most private quarrels, each of two individuals persuades himself that he is in the right, and his neighbour in the wrong. Hence the propriety of arbitrations, references, and appeals to courts of justice, that persons more disinterested may judge, and prevent that injustice and desolation, which would result from deciding private disputes by single combat or acts of violence.

But rulers of nations are as liable to be misled by their passions and interests as other men ; and when misled, they are very sure to mislead those of their subjects, who have confidence in their wisdom and integrity. Hence it is highly important that the custom of war should be abolished, and some other mode adopted, to settle disputes between nations. In private disputes there may be cause of complaint on each side, while neither has reason to shed the blood of the other ; much less to shed the blood of innocent family connexions, neighbours and friends. So of two nations, each may have cause of complaint, while neither can be justified in making war ; and much less in shedding the blood of innocent people, who have had no hand in giving the offence.

It is an awful feature in the character of war, and a strong reason why it should not be countenanced, that it involves the innocent with the guilty in the calamities it inflicts ; and often falls with the greatest vengeance on those, who have had no concern in the management of national affairs. It surely is not a crime to be born in a country, which is afterwards invaded ; yet in how many instances do war makers punish or destroy, for no other crime than being a native or resident of an invaded territory. A mode of revenge or redress, which makes no distinction between the innocent and the guilty,

ought to be discountenanced by every friend to justice and humanity.

Besides, as the rulers of a nation are as liable as other people, to be governed by passion and prejudice, there is as little prospect of justice in permitting war for the decision of national disputes, as there would be in permitting an incensed individual to be, in his own cause, complainant, witness, judge, jury and executioner. In what point of view, then, is war not to be regarded with horror?

## SECTION VI.

*“ Shall the sword devour forever ? ”*

That wars have been so over-ruled by God, as to be the occasion of some benefits to mankind, will not be denied ; for the same may be said of every fashion or custom that ever was popular among men. War may have been the occasion of advancing useful arts and sciences, and even of the spread of the gospel. But we are not to do evil that good may come, nor to countenance evil because God may over-rule it for good.

One advantage of war, which has often been mentioned, is this—it gives opportunity for the display of extraordinary talents, of daring enterprize and intrepidity. But let robbery and piracy become as popular as war has been, and will not these customs give as great opportunity for the display of the same talents and qualities of mind ? Shall we therefore encourage robbery and piracy ? Indeed, it may be asked, do we not encourage these crimes ? For what is modern warfare but a popular, refined and legalized mode of robbery, piracy, and murder, preceded by a proclamation, giving notice of the purpose of the war maker ? But whether such a proclamation changes the character of the following enormities, is a question to be decided at a higher court than that of any earthly sovereign, and by a law superior to the law of nations.

The answer of a pirate to Alexander the Great, was as just as it was severe : “ By what right,” said the king, “ do you infest the seas ? ” The pirate replied, “ By the same that you infest the universe. But because I do it in a small

ship, I am called a robber ; and because you do the same acts with a great fleet, you are called a conqueror."

Equally just was the language of the Scythian ambassadors to the same deluded monarch : " Thou boastest that the only design of thy marches is to extirpate robbers. *Thou thyself art the greatest robber in the world.*"

May we then plead for the custom of war, because it produces such mighty robbers as Alexander? Or if once in an age it should produce such a character as Washington, will this make amends for the slaughter of twenty millions of human beings, and all the other concomitant evils of war?

If the characters of such men as Alexander had been held in just abhorrence by mankind, this single circumstance would probably have saved many millions from untimely death. But the celebrity which delusion has given to that desolating robber, and the renown attached to his splendid crimes, have excited the ambition of others, in every succeeding age, and filled the world with misery and blood.

Is it not then time for christians to learn *not* to attach glory to guilt, or to praise actions which God will condemn? That Alexander possessed talents worthy of admiration, will be admitted. But when such talents are prostituted to the vile purpose of military fame, by spreading destruction and misery through the world, a character is formed, which should be branded with everlasting infamy. And nothing perhaps short of the commission of such atrocious deeds, can more endanger the welfare of community, than the applause given to successful military desperadoes. Murder and robbery are not the less criminal for being perpetrated by a king, or a mighty warrior. Nor will the applause of deluded mortals secure such monsters from the vengeance of Heaven.

Dr. Prideaux states, that in the fifty battles fought by Cæsar, he slew *one million, one hundred and ninety two thousand* of his enemies. If to this number we add the loss of troops on his own side, and the slaughter of women and children on both sides, we shall probably have a total of **TWO MILLIONS** of human beings, sacrificed to the ambition of one man.

If we assign an equal number to Alexander, and the same to Napoleon, which we probably may do with justice, then to *three* military butchers, we may ascribe the untimely death of six millions of the human family : a number equal to the whole population of the United States, in the year 1800. Is it not then reasonable to believe, that a greater number of human beings have been slain by the murderous custom of war, than the whole amount of the present population of the world ? To what heathen deity was there ever offered such a multitude of human sacrifices, as have been offered to human ambition ?

Shall then the christian world remain silent in regard to the enormity of this custom, and even applaud the deeds of men, who were a *curse* to the age in which they lived ? men, whose talents were employed, not in advancing the happiness of the human race, but in spreading desolation and misery through the world ! On the same principle that such men are applauded, we may applaud the chief of a band of robbers and pirates in proportion to his ingenuity, intrepidity, and address, in doing mischief. If the chief displays these energies of mind in a high degree in a successful course of plundering and murder, then he is a "*mighty hunter*," a man of great renown.

But if we attach glory to such exploits, do we not encourage others to adopt the same road to fame ? Besides, would not such applause betray a most depraved taste ; a taste which makes no proper distinction between virtue and vice, or doing good and doing mischief ; a taste to be captivated with the glare of bold exploits, but regardless of the *end* to which they were directed, the *means* by which they were accomplished, the *misery* which they occasioned to others, and the light in which they must be viewed by a benevolent God ?

## SECTION VII.

An important question now occurs. By what means is it possible to produce such a change in the state of society, and the views of christian nations, that every ruler shall feel that his own honor, safety and happiness, depend on his displaying a pacific spirit, and forbearing to engage in offensive wars ? Is

it not possible to form powerful peace societies, in every nation of Christendom, whose object shall be, to support government and secure the nation from war ?

In such societies we may hope to engage every true minister of the Prince of peace, and every christian who possesses the temper of his Master. In this number would be included a large portion of important civil characters.

Having formed societies for this purpose, let the contributions be liberal, in some measure corresponding with the magnitude and importance of the object. Let these be judiciously appropriated to the purpose of diffusing light, and the spirit of peace in every direction, and for exciting a just abhorrence of war in every breast.

Let printing presses be established in sufficient numbers to fill every land with news papers, tracts and periodical works, adapted to the pacific design of the societies. Let these all be calculated for the support and encouragement of good rulers, and for the cultivation of a mild and pacific temper among every class of citizens.

The object would be so perfectly harmonious with the spirit, the design, and the glory of the gospel, that it might be frequently the subject of discussion in the pulpit ; the subject of sabbath and every day conversation, and be introduced into our daily prayers to God, whether in public or private.

Another means of advancing the object, deserves particular consideration ; namely, early education. This grand object should have a place in every plan of education, in families, common schools, academies and universities.

“ Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” The power of education has been tried, to make children of a ferocious, blood-thirsty character. Let it now have a fair chance, to see what it will do towards making mild, friendly and peaceful citizens.

As there is an aversion to war in the breast of a large majority of people in every civilized community ; and as its evils have been recently felt in every christian nation ; is there not ground to hope, that it would be as easy to excite a disposition



for peace, as a disposition for war? If then, peace societies should be formed, and such means be put in operation, as have been suggested, is it not very certain, that the most beneficial effects would result? Would they not gradually produce an important change in the views and state of society, and give a new character to christian nations? What institution or project would more naturally unite all pious and virtuous men? And on what efforts could we more reasonably hope for the blessing of the God of peace?

Should prudent, vigorous, and well conducted efforts be made, in a century from this time, the nations of christendom may consider human sacrifices, made by war, in the same light they now view the ancient sacrifices to Moloch; or in the light of wanton and deliberate murder. And such a change in the views of men must conduce to the security and stability of human governments, and to the felicity of the world. As soon as christian nations are impressed with the importance of this change, they may find access to the heathen. But while christians indulge the custom of war, which is in truth the very worst custom in the world, with what face can they reprove the heathen, or assume among them the office of instructors! "Physician, heal thyself."

The Bible Societies, already formed in various parts of the world, must naturally, and even necessarily aid the object now proposed. Indeed, the two objects are so congenial, that whatever promotes the one, will aid the other. Nor is it easy to see how any Bible Society could refrain from voluntarily affording all possible encouragement to peace societies. The same may be said of all missionary societies, and societies for propagating the gospel. Should these all cordially cooperate, they must form a most powerful association.

But our hopes and expectations are not limited here. The societies of Friends and Shakers will come in of course, and cordially contribute to the glorious object. May we not also expect a ready acquiescence from the particular churches of every denomination in the land? And why may we not look to the various literary and political societies, for aid in a plan



which has the security, the peace, and the happiness of the world for its object.

That there are obstacles and objections to be encountered we cannot deny ; but it is confidently believed, that there are none insurmountable ; because God will aid in such a cause, and the time is at hand, when his prediction shall be fulfilled.

As the object is not of a party nature, and as party distinctions and party purposes have been excluded from the discussion, it is hoped no objection will arise from the present state of political parties in this country. The supposed delusion in respect to war, is confined to no nation, nor to any political sect in any country. What has been said on the subject has not been designed for the purpose of reproach against any class of men ; but with a desire to befriend and benefit all who have not examined the subject ; and to rouse christians to one united and vigorous effort to bless the world with peace.

An eloquent speech, delivered by Mr. Wilberforce in the British Parliament, in favor of propagating christianity in India, with a view to abolish human sacrifices in that country, contains some observations, which we hope he will repeat in the same house on the present subject :

“ It was,” said he, “ formerly my task to plead the cause of a people, whose woes affected every heart, and who were finally rescued from the situation in which they groaned, by the abolition of the slave trade. That cause was doubtless the cause of suffering humanity ; but I declare, that if we entirely exclude the consideration of religion, humanity appears to me to be still more concerned in the cause I am now pleading, than in that for which I was formerly the advocate.”—“ I, for my part, consider it as absolute blasphemy to believe that that great Being, to whom we owe our existence, has doomed so large a portion of mankind to remain forever in that state in which we see the natives of India at this day. I am confident his providence has furnished remedies fitted to the case, and I hold it to be our duty to apply them. And I am satisfied, that not only may this be safely attempted, but that its accomplishment will be in the highest degree beneficial.”

May God grant that this powerful advocate for "suffering humanity" may have his heart fervently engaged for the abolition of the *war trade*. Here he may find a new and ample field for the display of his piety, his philanthropy and his eloquence. With the greatest propriety he may state, that the miseries, occasioned by the universal custom of war, are far more dreadful, than those occasioned by either of the limited customs, for the abolition of which he has so honorably and successfully contended.

If it would be blasphemy to believe that God has doomed so great a portion of his creatures, as the natives of India, to remain forever the subjects of their present delusions respecting human sacrifices; can it be less than blasphemy to believe that he has doomed not only all Christendom, but all the nations of the earth, to be forever so deluded, as to support the most desolating custom, which ever resulted from human depravity, or which ever afflicted the race of Adam? Here with sincerity I can adopt the words of Mr. Wilberforce—"I am confident that his providence has furnished remedies fitted to the case; and I hold it to be our duty to apply them."

I have till now avoided the mention of our present war, that nothing should appear calculated to excite party feelings. But as the present calamity is severely felt, I must be permitted to express my hope, that the affliction will favor the present object. If our distresses may be the occasion of opening the eyes of this people to see the delusions of war in general, and of exciting them to suitable exertions to prevent a return of such a calamity, an important benefit may result not only to posterity, but to the world. For if suitable exertions should be made in this country, the influence will not be bounded by the Atlantic; it will cross the ocean, and find its way into the Bible Societies, and other religious societies in Great Britain, and on the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. Nor will it be many years before it will find access to the houses of legislation and the palaces of kings.

Here christians of every sect may find an object worthy of their attention, and in which they may cordially unite. For

this object they may with propriety leave behind all party zeal and party distinctions, and bury their animosities in one united effort, to give peace to the world.

Let lawyers, politicians and divines, and men of every class who can write or speak, consecrate their talents to the diffusion of light, and love, and peace. Should there be an effort, such as the object demands, God will grant his blessing, posterity will be greatful, heaven will be filled with joy and praise, and "the sword shall *not* devour forever."

### SECTION VIII.

Let not the universality of the custom be regarded as an objection to making the attempt. If the custom be wicked and destructive, the more universal, the more important is a reformation. If war is ever to be set aside, an effort must some time be made; and why not now, as well as at any future day? What objection can now be stated, which may not be brought forward at any after period?

If men must have objects for the display of heroism, let their intrepidity be shown in firmly meeting the formidable prejudices of a world in favor of war. Here is an opportunity for the display of such heroism as will occasion no remorse on a dying bed, and such as God will approve at the final reckoning. In this cause, ardent zeal, genuine patriotism, undaunted fortitude, the spirit of enterprize, and every quality of mind worthy of a hero, may be gloriously displayed. Who ever displayed a more heroic spirit than Saint Paul? For such heroism and love of country as he displayed, the object now proposed will open the most ample field at home and abroad.

That there is nothing in the nature of mankind, which renders war necessary and unavoidable—nothing which inclines them to it, which may not be overcome by the power of education, may appear from what is discoverable in the two sects already mentioned. The Quakers and Shakers are of the same nature with other people, "men of like passions" with those who uphold the custom of war. All the difference between them and others results from education and habit. The

principles of their teachers are diffused through their societies, impressed on the minds of old and young; and an aversion to war and violence is excited, which becomes habitual, and has a governing influence on their hearts, their passions and their lives.

If then it has been proved to be *possible*, by the force of education, to produce such an aversion to war, that people will not even *defend* their own lives by acts of violence; shall it be thought impossible by similar means, to destroy the popularity of *offensive* war, and exclude the deadly custom from the abodes of men?

The following things will perhaps be generally admitted; that the christian religion has abolished the practice of enslaving captives, and in several respects mitigated the evils of war, by introducing milder usages; that if the temper of our Saviour should universally prevail among men, wars *must cease* to the ends of the earth; that the scriptures give reason to hope such a time of peace will result from the influence of the christian religion.

If these views and expectations are well founded, does it not follow of course, that the spirit and custom of war is directly opposed to the principles and spirit of the gospel; that in proportion as the gospel has its proper effect on the minds of men, an aversion to war must be excited; and that it is the duty of every christian to do all in his power to bring the custom into disrepute, and to effect its abolition?

Can it be consistent with due regard to the gospel, for christians to hold their peace, while they see a custom prevailing, which annually sweeps off myriads of their brethren, hurrying them into eternity by violence and murder? Can they forbear to exert themselves, to put an end to this *voluntary plague*? Can we feel a conviction that war is in its nature opposed to the principles and spirit of our religion, and that it is the purpose of God to put an end to this scourge by the influence of the gospel; and still sleep on without any effort to produce the effect, which we believe is intended by our heavenly Father?

If the christian religion is to put an end to war, it must be by the efforts of those who are under its influence. So long therefore as christians acquiesce in the custom, the desirable event will be delayed.

Christianity is not itself a powerful intelligent *agent*. It is neither a God, an angel, nor a man. It is only a system of divine instructions, relating to *duty* and *happiness*; to be used by men for their own benefit, the benefit of each other, and the honor of its Author. Like all other instructions, they are of no use any farther than they are regarded and reduced to practice.

In what way then is it possible that christianity should put an end to war, but by enlightening the minds of men, as to the evil of the custom, and exciting them to an opposite course of conduct? Is it *possible* that the custom of war should be abolished by the influence of religion, while christians themselves are its advocates?

If God has appointed that men shall be saved by the *preaching* of the gospel, the gospel *must be preached*, or the end will never be accomplished. So if he has appointed that by the same gospel this world shall be delivered from war, this also must be effected by similar means. The tendency of the gospel to this effect must be illustrated and enforced; its opposition to war must be displayed in the *lives of christians*; and men must be influenced by gospel motives to cease from destroying one another.

There are other effects, which we expect will be produced by christianity, namely, the abolition of *heathen idolatry*, and the various modes of offering *human sacrifices*. But how are these events to be brought about? Do we expect that our Bibles will spread their covers for wings, fly through the world, and convert the nations, without the agency of christians? Should we expect the gospel would ever convert the heathen from their idolatry, if those, who profess to be its friends, should themselves generally encourage idolaters in their present courses, by a compliance with their customs? Such expectations would be just as reasonable, as to expect the gospel

will occasion wars to cease, without the exertions of christians, and while they countenance the custom by their own examples.

It will perhaps be pleaded, that mankind are not yet sufficiently enlightened, to apply the principles of the gospel for the abolition of war; and that we must wait for a more improved state of society. *Improved in what?* in the science of blood? Are such improvements to prepare the way for peace? Why not wait a few centuries, until the natives of India become more improved in their idolatrous customs, before we attempt to convert them to christianity? Do we expect that by continuing in the practice of idolatry, their minds will be prepared to receive the gospel? If not, let us be consistent, and while we use means for the conversion of heathens, let means also be used for the conversion of christians. For war is in fact a heathenish and savage custom, of the most malignant, most desolating, and most horrible character. It is the greatest curse, and results from the grossest delusions that ever afflicted a guilty world.

#### NOTE.

After the preceding pages were chiefly in type, I saw for the first time "The COMPLAINT OF PEACE" and "ANTIPOLEMON," written by Erasmus. The coincidence of opinions and remarks must strike every reader, who shall compare the writings of Erasmus with this Review. He will, however, also perceive a disparity of eloquence not much to the honor of the latter. But should the Review be only the occasion of exciting Christians to read the more important work of Erasinus, my labor will neither be in vain nor regretted. In his discussion of the subject, there is a display of reason, religion and eloquence, calculated to convince every mind, which is not strongly fortified by the delusions of prejudice, and to interest every heart which is less hardened than Pharaoh's. It is indeed astonishing that even popish prejudices could resist the force of his reasoning against the custom of war. As a specimen of his spirit and style, we quote the following passages, in reference to the custom of using the symbol of the Cross for a *standard*, partaking of the Lord's Supper before going to battle, and saying the Lord's prayer.

"The absurdest circumstance of all those respecting the use of the cross as a *standard* is, that you see it glittering and waving high in air, in both the contending armies at once. Divine service is performed to the same Christ in both armies at the same time. What a shocking sight! No! crosses dashing against crosses, and christ on this side firing bullets



at CHRIST on the other; Cross against Cross, and Christ against Christ !  
He adds :—

“ Let us now imagine we hear a soldier among these *fighting* Christians saying the Lord’s prayer. “ OUR FATHER,” says he : O, hardened wretch ! can you call him *Father*, when you are just going to cut your brother’s throat ? “ *Hallowed be thy name :*” how can the name of God be more impiously *unhallowed*, than by mutual bloody murder among you, his sons ? “ *Thy kingdom come :*” do you pray for the coming of *his kingdom*, while you are endeavoring to establish an *earthly despotism*, by the spilling of the blood of God’s sons and subjects ? “ *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven :*” His *will* in heaven is for *peace*, but you are now meditating *war*. Dare you say to your Father in heaven, “ *Give us this day our daily bread,*” when you are going the next minute to burn your brother’s cornfields ; and had rather lose the benefits of them yourself, than suffer him to enjoy them unmolested ? With what face can you say, “ *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,*” when so far from *forgiving* your own brother, you are going, with all the haste you can, to *murder* him in cold blood, for an alleged trespass, which after all is but imaginary ? Do you presume to deprecate *danger* of “ *temptation,*” who, not without great danger to yourself, are doing all you can to force your brother into danger ? Do you deserve to be *delivered from evil*, that is, from the *evil being* to whose impulse you submit yourself, and by whose spirit you are guided, in contriving the greatest possible evil to your brother ?”

It may be doubted whether a complete history of all the conduct of infernal spirits, would contain any thing more inconsistent, more abominable, or more to be deplored, than has appeared in the history of *warring christians*. To behold two contending armies, from christian nations, so deluded as mutually to offer prayers to the same benevolent God, for success in their attempts to butcher each other, is enough to fill the mind of any considerate person with amazement and horror. Yea, a sight like this might cause weeping in heaven, and triumph in hell !









